



The Postcolonial and Matrixial Gaze in Ritwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy

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Abstract: Ritwik Ghatak's Partition trilogy, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1965), explores displacement through the lives of three female protagonists: Nita, Anusua, and Sita. Scholarship on these films has illuminated the allegorical relationship between gender, nation, and the loss of Bengal. This article extends that scholarship by bringing postcolonial film theory into dialogue with Bracha L. Ettinger's concept of the matrixial gaze. Through close analysis of framing, duration, editing, sound, and narrative position, it distinguishes two competing modes of looking: a postcolonial-nationalist gaze that risks fixing women as figures of collective loss, and a matrixial mode of wit(h)nessing grounded in borderlinking, fascinancy, and co-emergence. In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, the two modes coexist as Nita's family instrumentalizes her while the film opens intervals of ethical proximity. In *Komal Gandhar*, theatrical and national allegory contend with Anusua's relational agency. In *Subarnarekha*, caste, patriarchy, and social exclusion progressively constrict Sita's possibilities, although the ending retains a fragile image of renewal. The argument is not that historical Partition is identical to Ettinger's prenatal model but that matrixial concepts can illuminate the trilogy's cinematic forms of shared, irreducible loss.

Keywords: Ritwik Ghatak; Partition trilogy; Partition of Bengal; matrixial gaze; postcolonial cinema; Bracha L. Ettinger; feminist film theory



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The Matrixial and the Postcolonial Gaze

The 1947 Partition of Bengal caused profound displacement, communal violence, and enduring disruption to familial and cultural life. Rather than ending with the drawing of a border, displacement continued to shape everyday experience and memories of home (Zamindar, 2007; Sarkar, 2009). For Ritwik Ghatak, who had moved from East Bengal to the western part of the province, Partition became an abiding artistic and political concern. Three films in particular—*Meghe Dhaka Tara* (*The Cloud-Capped Star*; Ghatak, 1960), *Komal Gandhar* (*E-Flat*; Ghatak, 1961), and *Subarnarekha* (*The Golden Thread*; Ghatak, 1965)—are commonly read together as his Partition trilogy. Although produced under different circumstances, each approaches the continuing effects of displacement through fractured families, damaged relationships, and the search for belonging. Ghatak himself described *Meghe Dhaka Tara* as a largely subconscious engagement, *Komal Gandhar* as more conscious, and *Subarnarekha* as a particularly serious work (Ghatak, 2003, p. 113). Read together, the films offer a compelling account of how cinematic form registers historical experiences that resist straightforward narration.

This article argues that two competing modes of looking operate across the trilogy. The first, termed here the postcolonial-nationalist gaze, names the tendency to make displaced women legible primarily as emblems of the family, culture, or nation. It is not a universal attribute of postcolonial cinema; rather, it is a historically specific configuration of nationalist allegory, patriarchal authority, and visual objectification. The second is the matrixial gaze developed by Bracha L. Ettinger: an ethical-aesthetic possibility of encountering vulnerability without claiming mastery over the other. The matrixial is associated with borderlinking, fascinace, and co-

emergence, and with Ettinger's model of subjectivity as encounter (Ettinger, 2020). Whereas the phallic-scorp model emphasizes distinction between looking subject and viewed object, the matrixial offers a language for connections among differentiated, partial subjects (Ettinger, 2001, 2006a). The following readings ask when Ghatak's films reinforce the first mode, when they interrupt it, and how sound and duration complicate any simple opposition between them.

Such a comparison requires a historically grounded account of postcolonial cinema. As Ponzanesi and Waller (2012) suggest, the category concerns cinema's engagement with history, subjectivity, epistemology, and political consequence rather than geography alone. It overlaps with Third Cinema, migrant cinema, and other formations but cannot be reduced to any of them. In her discussion of Ghatak's place within global art cinema, Dass (2010, pp. 238–251) shows how his filmmaking disrupts established divisions between commercial and auteurist practices. His critiques emerge from intimate structures—the refugee family, the middle-class household, and the cultural collective—as much as from the state. His involvement with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) and left cultural politics helps explain his interest in performance, social contradiction, and a cinema addressed to broad audiences (Dasgupta, 1985; Biswas, 2015; Dass, 2017). The trilogy therefore examines national history through the everyday practices by which power is reproduced.

Women occupy a central position within these practices and within this article's close readings. As Ram (2018) observes, colonial looking combined scrutiny with the power to represent and intervene. Nationalist representation may reproduce related hierarchies when women become signs of cultural authenticity and continuity; Chatterjee (1993) identifies this gendering of the nation's supposedly autonomous domestic domain. Nita in *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, Anusua in *Komal Gandhar*, and Sita in *Subarnarekha* are consequently vulnerable to both patriarchal control and allegorical appropriation. Influential readings have explored Ghatak's epic structures, kinship relations, and images of the lost homeland (Rajadhyaksha, 1982; Kapur, 2000; Biswas, 2004;

Sarkar, 2009). Chowdhury (2015) additionally places Ghatak within a broader scopic regime of Bengali Partition cinema. Such approaches are indispensable to the films' historical interpretation. Nevertheless, when a woman is read solely as Mother Bengal or the lost homeland, her contradictory desires and lived experience risk receding behind the symbol. This article seeks to hold the allegorical and the personal in tension rather than reject either level.

Mulvey's (1975) account of visual pleasure locates gendered looking within cinematic structures of desire and power. Kaplan (1997) extends the problem of representation to imperial relations, while Shohat and Stam (1994) expose cinema's entanglement with colonial ways of seeing. These arguments clarify why looking is never automatically neutral. Yet their principal emphasis on asymmetry cannot, by itself, describe every cinematic encounter with suffering. The question here is whether film may also sustain a relation that neither appropriates the female figure nor dissolves her into a collective metaphor. Dass's (2017) discussion of Ghatak's theatricality provides a useful account of how performance unsettles spectatorship. Ettinger's matrixial theory supplies a further vocabulary for that encounter, without negating the continuing force of gendered and colonial power.

Ettinger develops the matrixial borderspace through psychoanalysis, feminist aesthetics, and an account of prenatal relationality (Ettinger, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2020). Its originating model is the relation between a becoming subject and an already living maternal subject: neither fusion nor complete separation. Borderlinking describes relations that occur across a shared threshold while preserving difference. Co-emergence concerns the transformation of partial subjects in an encounter; fascinancy names an extended, attentive affective openness to another's emergence. The matrixial gaze thus offers an alternative to the fantasy of total knowledge associated with mastery. In Ettinger's distinctive spelling, to "wit(h)ness" is both to witness and to be implicated

in an encounter with another's vulnerability. These terms designate a theorized psychic and ethical relation, not simply a close-up, an extended shot, or an emotional viewer response.

Applying this model to Ghatak involves a conceptual translation that requires care. Ettinger's account is grounded in specifically maternal and prenatal relations; it should not be treated as a general synonym for empathy, collective feeling, or historical trauma. Nevertheless, her writings also consider artistic encounters with the traces of catastrophic violence (Ettinger, 2001, 2006a, 2020). This article therefore proposes an analogy of relational form, not an equivalence between the Holocaust, the Partition of Bengal, and prenatal experience. The comparison is limited: the historical circumstances, scales of violence, and politics of each event remain distinct. What may travel from Ettinger's theory to Ghatak's cinema is a vocabulary for encounters in which the experience of loss exceeds one person's ownership, even as each person remains singular.

This distinction between theoretical origin and interpretive use is crucial. Matrixial concepts originate in Ettinger's account of sexual difference but also describe modes of relationality and artistic encounter. The analysis does not claim that Partition literally constituted a prenatal borderspace or that displacement abolished individual identities. Rather, it asks whether Ghatak's images and sounds make room for a form of shared witnessing in which separateness and connection coexist. The claim is testable through close reading: when does cinematic duration invite attention to a character's irreducible experience, and when do narrative or visual conventions subsume that character within a symbolic role? This approach also acknowledges the productive limits of psychoanalytic translation across distinct colonial and historical contexts (Khanna, 2003).

The trilogy's female protagonists thus move within intersecting economies of nationalist allegory, class hierarchy, caste, and patriarchy, while Ghatak's cinematic form repeatedly questions the terms on which they can be seen.

Methodology

This qualitative study undertakes comparative textual analysis of *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Komal Gandhar*, and *Subarnarekha*. “Partition trilogy” is a retrospective critical designation rather than Ghatak’s own formal title (Rajadhyaksha, 1982; Sarkar, 2009). The films are examined through framing, movement, shot duration, editing, sound, performance, and the spatial organization of bodies. The selection of scenes is purposive: each sequence places a female protagonist in a relation of familial or national scrutiny, produces an opening for reciprocal or shared attention, or stages the collapse of such a possibility. Readings attend to the difference between a character’s act of looking, a shot’s point of view, and the position the film offers its spectator. These categories cannot be assumed to coincide. The argument is interpretive rather than a measurement of audience response.

Three concepts organize the analysis. Borderlinking identifies relational thresholds that connect without collapsing subjects into one another. Fascinance names an interval of suspended attention that may resist immediate narrative consumption; duration alone is not sufficient to establish it. Co-emergence describes an encounter in which the relation between the on-screen figure and a possible spectator becomes ethically and affectively consequential (Ettinger, 2001, 2020). These concepts are treated as heuristic tools, not automatic properties of a particular camera angle or soundtrack. The resulting comparisons trace an unstable progression: coexistence in *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, contested relationality in *Komal Gandhar*, and severe restriction—though not unqualified disappearance—of matrixial possibilities in *Subarnarekha*.

Meghe Dhaka Tara (1960): The Postcolonial Gaze and the Matrixial Borderspace

Meghe Dhaka Tara establishes a tension between the names imposed upon Nita and her own experience. The title appears in the credits and returns in the Shillong sanatorium, where her elder brother Shankar describes her as a “cloud-capped star.” The formulation echoes the earlier

idealization of Nita in Sanat's letter. When Shankar repeats it in a scene marked by impending loss, the metaphor's significance changes: the language of romantic admiration becomes inseparable from grief. The viewer is asked not merely to recognize the symbol but to attend to a person whose desires have been eclipsed by the needs of others.

The film opens with a wide view of a tree and Nita moving through the landscape surrounding the refugee settlement. Rather than immediately isolating her face, the shot situates her in a social and physical environment. Its duration allows spectators to attend to her movement and the space she inhabits before the drama of familial obligation takes hold. Read matrixially, this provisional shared orientation establishes a possibility of borderlinking, although the camera's position cannot by itself guarantee a non-objectifying gaze.

Within the household, Nita's mother closely monitors her earning capacity and domestic labor. The resulting exchanges translate Nita's care into an obligation from which others benefit. Doorways, posts, and other internal frames repeatedly confine her within a domestic visual order. These compositions can be read as the formal counterpart of a patriarchal economy in which the daughter becomes a resource. At the same time, the film's exposure of that economy is not identical to an endorsement of the mother's perspective: the camera can reveal an objectifying look precisely in order to make it available for criticism.

A second division emerges between Sanat's romantic account of Nita and the choices he makes. His idealization of her as a "cloud-capped star" does not prevent his attention from shifting to her sister Geeta. Nita's dismissive response to the metaphor unsettles the very image intended to praise her. When she discovers Sanat and Geeta together, the camera's attention to her face interrupts the ease with which the surrounding characters move on. More broadly, abrupt cuts and expressionistic sound punctuate scenes of labor and disappointment, giving Nita's suffering a force that conventional realist continuity might suppress. The repeated motif of a broken sandal sharpens

the social dimension of her ordeal: near the beginning Nita repairs her footwear and continues walking; later another woman repeats the action before Shankar's eyes. The recurrence moves beyond individual misfortune to a pattern of feminine labor and sacrifice. Likewise, Nita's ironic suggestion that she be placed in a glass case "like a wax doll" names the violence of being preserved as an ideal while denied a life of her own. Rather than assume that these devices are simply either exploitative or emancipatory, the analysis recognizes their double potential: spectacle and critical interruption can inhabit the same formal gesture.

The hills recur as an image of a life not entirely governed by economic survival. Nita remembers an early-morning climb with Shankar and the experience of sunrise as something difficult to put into words. The recollection preserves a sense of relation to place and to another person that exceeds immediate utility. Later references to the inaccessible hills mark how far such possibilities have receded. When a sanatorium finally places Nita among them, the return is cruelly belated. Read through Ettinger, this landscape offers an image of relational memory rather than proof of an actual prenatal state: it becomes a space in which connection, loss, and the impossibility of restoration coexist.

Sound also complicates the film's forms of looking. Amplified domestic noises make the household oppressive, while the passing train can evoke the larger history of mobility, severance, and displacement. Such effects are not literal embodiments of a "postcolonial sound" but cinematic associations that connect intimate distress to historical pressure. Musical exchange between Nita and Shankar, by contrast, briefly redistributes attention: pauses, singing, and the camera's rhythm create an interval not wholly organized by the demands of work. Ghatak uses the soundtrack not simply to illustrate emotion but to produce friction between private experience and historical catastrophe.

Nita's self-reproach is among the film's most unsettling moments. She reflects on her failure to resist the wrongs done to her and on having lived too "ordinarily." These words register both the internalization of family expectations and an awareness of their cost. Ghatak's sustained attention to her face can be read as an occasion for wit(h)nessing: viewers encounter Nita's realization without being offered the comfort of an uncomplicated moral resolution. The moment does not redeem the exploitation that produced it.

The sanatorium sequence brings the film's competing tendencies to a crisis. Shankar speaks of developments at home, including a child learning to climb; the apparently minor subject of ascent recalls Nita's lost relationship with the hills. Her repeated cry that she wants to live breaks through the family's habitual language of endurance. The mountainous setting and heightened sound give the scene a monumental scale, but the intensity of Nita's plea also resists absorption into an allegory of the lost nation. The spectacle of her suffering and the possibility of matrixial proximity remain in tension. A spectator may be moved by her cry without claiming to possess her experience.

In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, therefore, the family's instrumentalization of Nita and the idealizing attention of others are countered, though never conclusively overcome, by the film's formal insistence on her singularity. The matrixial reading describes this unstable capacity to witness with her rather than simply convert her into a symbol.

Komal Gandhar (1961): Postcolonial Allegory and Matrixial Resistance of the Cultural Body

Komal Gandhar begins by placing its audience within a play about refugee displacement. References to the river Padma, a lost home, and the shame of being labeled a refugee move between theatrical speech and the characters' everyday lives. When Anusua later recalls a phrase from the performance in conversation with Bhriгу, the boundary between represented grief and

remembered loss becomes porous. The film uses theater not as an escape from history but as a means through which historical experience is rehearsed, contested, and shared.

The rehearsals also expose structures of authority. In shots aligned with Bhrigu as director, Anusua appears framed by stage architecture and by the presence of men watching her performance. Cuts back to Bhrigu invite an assessment of her acting through his authority. These choices risk positioning Anusua as an instrument of the troupe's cultural mission. Nevertheless, the film does not fully equate the director's judgment with its own: the theatrical frame makes the hierarchy visible and therefore open to interrogation.

Anusua's relationship with Samar and Bhrigu similarly carries a burden of national allegory. Samar's proposed departure suggests a life elsewhere; Bhrigu's attachment to the theater binds him to unfinished cultural and political work in Bengal. Anusua's choice can thus be overread as a referendum on belonging or abandonment. Yet the film also presents her as a participant in artistic work and as a bearer of personal memory. The distinction matters: a feminist reading need not deny her allegorical significance, but it must resist treating her decision as nothing more than the choice of a nation.

The sequence at the abandoned railway line stages this tension with particular force. Tracks end near the river, rendering the border both a material interruption and a reminder of journeys that once joined places now divided. Anusua looks toward the lost landscape while Bhrigu recalls his own family's home beyond the border. A prolonged composition allows their separate memories to occupy the same visual and temporal field. What initially risks becoming an iconic spectacle of the displaced woman develops into a dialogue of partial perspectives. Bhrigu's description of a railway line that changed from a "plus sign" to a "minus sign" gives the historical rupture a striking spatial form. The encounter may be understood as borderlinking precisely because the two characters do not share an identical past.

Fascinace is suggested here by the interval in which the scene allows memory and place to resonate without forcing an immediate resolution. Anusua's recollection of the Bengali word "*nischindi*," associated with her grandmother and a feeling of freedom from anxiety, likewise carries an intimate sense of security irrecoverable after displacement. This memory is neither a transparent record of a lost past nor the possession of an abstract national subject. It passes through speech and listening, retaining the differences among those who remember.

Songs and other sonic elements strengthen the film's attention to regional identity and loss. Musical and theatrical performance can simultaneously consolidate a collective Bengali culture and open it to particular voices. The recurring railway imagery, intensified by voices and sound, makes division perceptible without reducing its consequences to a single national statement. Sound, in this reading, remains an ambivalent site of both collective symbolism and relational encounter.

When Bhriku asks Anusua to draw on her memories of 1947 while rehearsing *Shakuntala*, acting becomes a procedure for carrying history into performance. The invitation is not innocent: a male director shapes the terms on which a woman's grief becomes publicly expressive. Yet Anusua's recollection also exceeds his instruction. The moment reveals how political theater may transmit loss among performers and spectators without eliminating the tension between artistic agency and institutional authority.

The exchange involving Anusua's mother's diary offers a more intimate form of mediation. Entrusting Bhriku with the diary invites him to encounter a life through another person's words and memory. Ettinger's concept of metamorphosis, the transformative movement across relational boundaries, helps clarify why the object matters beyond its informational contents (Ettinger, 2020). The diary establishes a connection across generations and absences, but it cannot

make the dead fully present or grant either character possession of another's grief. The scene consequently preserves Anusua's individuality within a broader field of cultural memory.

Komal Gandhar does not eliminate the pressure to make Anusua a sign of the divided homeland. Its theatrical, musical, and spatial forms nevertheless leave room for her participation in encounters that cannot be exhausted by that symbolism. Matrixial resistance here describes a precarious artistic achievement, not an escape from history or patriarchy.

Subarnarekha (1965): The Postcolonial Gaze and the Annihilation of the Matrixial Borderspace

Subarnarekha opens with a striking historical disjunction. An on-screen date places its opening in January 1948, as displaced people struggle over land and the language of national progress accompanies eviction. The film invokes the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, although the massacre occurred on April 13, 1919; its opening also precedes India's first Republic Day on January 26, 1950. The collision of commemorative language and historical chronology is important to the film's critique of nationalist triumphalism.¹ A woman from the marginalized Bagdi community, Kaushalya, is separated from her son Abhiram amid the disorder. News of Gandhi's assassination shortly afterward further destabilizes any celebratory account of independence. Rather than presenting nation-building as secure, Ghatak exposes its uneven and violent consequences for refugees and those excluded by caste and class.

When Mukherjee describes the prospective new home to young Sita, he evokes hills, water, flowers, and a house by the *Subarnarekha*. Ishwar interrupts with the warning not to deceive children. The disagreement establishes a central conflict between an imagined space of belonging and the social reality that repeatedly denies it. The landscape may be read as a figure for matrixial possibility, but it would be too simple to declare Ishwar's skepticism the sole cause of Sita's fate. His subsequent actions, especially his policing of kinship and caste boundaries, give that conflict concrete and destructive force.

In the river and airstrip sequences, Ghatak frequently sets small human figures against expansive landscapes and the material remains of war and industry. Wide framing and movement draw Sita and Abhiram into surroundings marked by earlier histories of violence. The children's play among ruined structures creates an interval of shared discovery without erasing the damage embedded in the location. Such compositions support a matrixial reading insofar as the figures remain distinct while becoming perceptible in relation to place and to each other.

The childhood encounter with a *bahurupi*, a performer in divine disguise, makes looking itself uncertain. Alternation between Sita's response and the performer's appearance prevents a stable division between threatening image and vulnerable human presence. The sequence invites sustained attention to transformation rather than mastery. Elsewhere, the contrast between an open landscape and the density of Calcutta's urban soundscape marks the progressive narrowing of Sita's possibilities. The distinction is affective and formal, not an absolute opposition between an innocent countryside and a corrupt city.

The recurring song "Aaj dhaaner khete" connects childhood and later recollection through melodic return. Heard again in altered circumstances, music makes continuity audible even as the conditions that supported it disappear. Silence surrounding the brothel confrontation has a different force: rather than providing consoling communion, it confronts the viewer with the limits of what can be spoken or repaired. Here fascination, if the term applies, is inseparable from shock and ethical discomfort.

As Sita grows older, singing becomes both an expression of her sensibility and an occasion for others to imagine her as the repository of a lost Bengali culture. Frames within doorways and windows give her an emblematic quality, especially when Ishwar observes her from a distance. Yet passages that extend beyond immediate narrative necessity can also register her independent

duration. The contrast is not between a wholly objectifying camera and a wholly liberating one; the same film holds together symbolic appropriation and glimpses of Sita's own experience.

In the bazaar, Ishwar's watchful attention to Sita and Abhiram's intimacy makes patriarchal scrutiny visible. His eventual opposition to their marriage also exposes the intersection of kinship control and caste hierarchy, since Abhiram's background becomes an obstacle to his acceptance within the family.

The invocation of the Ramayana at the abandoned airstrip compounds this pressure. An older speaker recalls the mythic Sita's return to the earth, making the heroine's name resonate with a pre-existing narrative of suffering and disappearance. The reference foreshadows the film's tragedy, but myth should not be mistaken for an explanation that renders her fate inevitable. Its force lies in the way an inherited cultural script interacts with the choices and exclusions of the present.

When Sita and Abhiram wish to marry, Ishwar responds with a wish that she were dead rather than defy him. Their subsequent move to Calcutta is followed by economic hardship. Abhiram, unable to sustain himself as a writer, works as a bus driver and dies in an accident. It is not necessary to present this death as a direct act of the postcolonial state to see the film's indictment of social precarity. Widowed and impoverished, Sita is brought to a brothel. The cramped room, theatrical lighting, and procuress's presentation of a supposedly respectable young woman turn her into an object of commercial inspection. The terms of spectacle have become brutally literal.

The prospective customer is Ishwar himself. Their recognition collapses the distinction between his protective claim to familial authority and the violence to which that authority has contributed. Sita takes her own life. Although a subsequent legal judgment does not hold Ishwar criminally responsible, the film refuses to resolve the question of moral implication so easily. His appeal to the journalist to recognize suffering beyond his own sister extends the accusation to a

wider social world. The encounter is difficult to describe as matrixial co-emergence: the possibility of sustaining a relation has been devastated by forces that the film lays bare.

In the ending, Ishwar accompanies Sita's son Binu toward the imagined new home beside the *Subarnarekha*. The child repeats a hope once offered to Sita, asking whether they will truly reach it. Ishwar's affirmative answer is fragile and ambiguous: it may be an act of care, a repetition of an earlier promise, or another evasion. The final invocation of Tagore and human renewal prevents an entirely closed interpretation. *Subarnarekha* brings relational possibility close to annihilation, but its last images leave open the question of whether another generation can inhabit that promise differently.

Conclusion

Bringing postcolonial film theory into conversation with Ettinger's matrixial aesthetics makes it possible to ask not only what Ghatak's women signify but also how the films invite spectators to encounter them. Across the trilogy, nationalist allegory, familial obligation, class inequality, and patriarchal surveillance repeatedly position female protagonists as bearers of collective loss. Yet framing, montage, sound, and duration often disturb that position. The films do not simply alternate between an oppressive nationalist gaze and an emancipatory camera; they expose how the two possibilities can coexist within a single sequence. This complexity is central to their continuing force.

In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, Nita's experience is repeatedly appropriated by her family and by idealizing metaphors, while the film's attention to her voice, body, and desire interrupts that appropriation. *Komal Gandhar* transfers the problem into theater and collective cultural work, where Anusua's participation resists reduction to a national choice. *Subarnarekha* intensifies the violence of caste, kinship, and economic exclusion, leading to Sita's death and leaving only a fragile prospect of renewal. Borderlinking, fascinancy, and co-emergence clarify these differences

as interpretive concepts; they should not become prescriptions that every trauma film must use lengthy shots or produce the same response in every viewer. The ethical task is to attend to the singularity of those represented without denying their relation to historical structures.

Three conclusions follow. First, matrixial theory can be extended cautiously to the study of historical cinema when its prenatal origins and its theoretical limits remain explicit. Second, Ghatak's distinctive arrangement of space, sound, performance, and duration makes the afterlife of Partition legible as more than a series of events. Third, the trilogy demonstrates why feminist analysis must keep collective allegory and individual experience in dialogue instead of allowing one to cancel the other.

Ghatak made these films decades before Ettinger formulated the matrixial gaze. They cannot therefore be treated as evidence that her psychoanalytic theory has been empirically confirmed. They can, however, illuminate what her account makes newly perceptible: cinema's capacity to stage an encounter with loss that resists possession, closure, and the reduction of a person to an emblem.

Editor's note: Additional scholarship

In addition to the scholarship already discussed, several essays in this issue of CINEJ address the trilogy: Erdem (2026) reads it through cognitive estrangement; Arslan (2026) and Diken Yücel and Gökmen (2026) discuss *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, the latter through Turkish women viewers' reception of the film; and Francis (2026) and Trivedi (2026) discuss *Subarnarekha*. O'Donnell (2004) examines how Ghatak's films construct woman and homeland, and Das and Charvak (2025) discuss feminist voice in his work; both bear on this article's argument about women as emblems of the nation. These sources have been included where directly relevant; the interpretive claims remain those of the authors.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Editor's note: The dates are given as the film presents them (see the discussion above). The massacre at Jallianwala Bagh took place on April 13, 1919, and India's first Republic Day was January 26, 1950.